Excelsior College Examination

Content Guide for

Organizational Behavior

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Important information to help you prepare
for this Excelsior College Examination

General Description of the Examination

The Organizational Behavior examination measures knowledge, comprehension, application, and analysis of material typically taught in a one-semester course required of business administration majors in the junior or senior year. Examination content is drawn from that commonly included in courses taught in business or psychology programs with such titles as Organizational Behavior, Organizational Psychology, Behavior in Organizations, Psychology of Business, or Psychology for Managers. A knowledge of the principles of management is assumed. The examination tests for a knowledge of facts and terminology, an understanding of basic concepts, and the ability to apply this knowledge and understanding to typical business situations.

The Organizational Behavior examination is one of three examinations in management of human resources offered by Excelsior College Examinations. The other two examinations in this area are Labor Relations and Human Resource Management. A small number of individual topics may appear in more than one of the examinations. Treatment of any overlapping topics will differ in emphasis, detail, and depth, as defined and specified in the individual test plan.

■ Uses for the Examination

Excelsior College, the test developer, recommends granting three (3) semester hours of upper-level undergraduate credit to students who receive a letter grade of C or higher on this examination. This recommendation is endorsed by the American Council on Education. Other colleges and universities also recognize this exam as a basis for granting credit or advanced standing. Individual institutions set their own policies for the amount of credit awarded and the minimum acceptable score. Before taking the exam, you should check with the institution from which you wish to receive credit to determine whether credit will be granted and/or to find out the minimum grade required for credit.

The Organizational Behavior examination fulfills the requirement in Organizational Behavior for Excelsior College students enrolled in the Bachelor of Science degree in Management of Human Resources. The examination fulfills the requirement in Organizational Behavior for nursing students pursuing a minor in Management of Human Resources. The examination may also be used as a business elective by Excelsior College students enrolled in the Bachelor of Science degree in general business or the Associate of Science degree programs that allow for free electives.

■ Examination Length and Scoring

The examination consists of approximately 120 four-option multiple-choice questions, some of which are unscored, pretest questions. You will have three (3) hours to complete the examination. Since you will not be able to tell which questions are being pretested, you should do your best on all of them. Scores are based on ability level as defined in the item response theory (IRT) method of exam development, rather than simply on your total number of correct answers. Your score will be reported as a letter grade.

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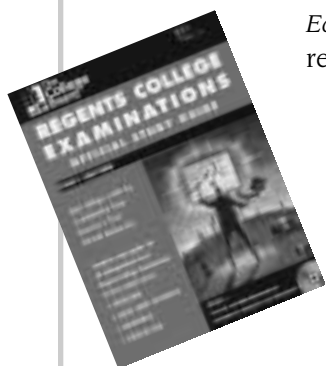
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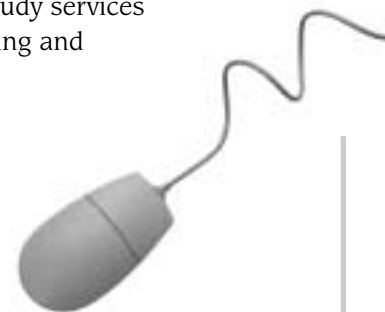
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Content Outline

Note: Additional coverage of a topic in other sections of the outline is indicated in parentheses.

I. The Field of Organizational Behavior (5%)

A. What is organizational behavior?

B. Historical evolution of organizational behavior

C. Theories and research methods

II. The Individual and Workforce Diversity (see also IIIB3a and VB) (30%)

A. Foundations of individual behavior

    1. Biographical/demographical characteristics of diversity

    2. Ability

        a. Physical

        b. Intellectual

    3. Personality

        a. Determinants

        b. Characteristics and traits

B. Values and attitudes

    1. Types of values (for example, terminal, instrumental, and cultural)

    2. Values and ethical behavior (see also IIIF6 and VD)

    3. Components of attitudes

    4. Attitudes and consistency

    5. Cognitive dissonance

    6. Attitudes and behavior

    7. Job satisfaction, commitment, and involvement

C. Perception

    1. Models of perception

        a. Physical

        b. Social

    2. Perceptual biases and stereotypes

    3. Attributions

D. Learning

    1. Classical conditioning

    2. Operant conditioning

    3. Social learning theory

E. Motivation

    1. Definition and concept

    2. Content (endogenous)

        a. Need theories (Maslow, McClelland, Alderfer)

        b. Motivation-hygiene theory (Herzberg)

    3. Process (exogenous)

        a. Expectancy (Vroom)

        b. Equity (Adams)

        c. Goal-setting (Locke)

4. From theory to application
    a. Theory X and Theory Y (McGregor)
    b. Cognitive evaluation
    c. Management by objectives (MBO)
    d. Behavior modification
    e. Performance-based compensation
    f. Job characteristics theory (Hackman and Oldham) (see also IVA4d)

F. **Decision making**
    1. Types of decisions
        a. Formal/informal
        b. Programmed/nonprogrammed
    2. Process
    3. Models and applications
        a. Rational/optimizing
        b. Bounded rationality/satisficing
        c. Garbage can
        d. Intuitive
        e. Leader-participation model (Vroom-Yetton) (see also IIIE4d)

III. Interpersonal Processes and the Group (35%)

A. **Communication**
    1. Communication process
    2. Types and methods
        a. Formal/informal
        b. Verbal/nonverbal
        c. Electronic
    3. Effective communication
        a. Enhancing communication
        b. Overcoming barriers
    4. Communication networks

B. **Foundations of group behavior**
    1. Definition and theories of group formation
    2. Types of groups
    3. Characteristics
        a. Composition and diversity (see also II and VB)
        b. Status
        c. Size
    4. Norms
    5. Roles
    6. Cohesiveness

C. **Group dynamics/processes**
    1. Stages of group formation/development
    2. Individual vs. group decision-making
    3. Effects of groups on individuals
        a. Social loafing
        b. Loss of individuality
        c. Social facilitation
        d. Group think and conformity
        e. Polarization/groupshift
        f. Synergy
    4. Decision-making tools/techniques
        a. Brainstorming
        b. Delphi technique
        c. Nominal group
        d. Devil's advocacy

D. **Work teams (see also IVA4f)**
    1. Autonomous/self-managed
    2. Cross functional/task forces
    3. Quality circles

E. **Leadership**
    1. Leaders vs. managers
    2. Trait theories
    3. Behavioral theories
        a. Ohio State studies
        b. University of Michigan studies
        c. Managerial grid (Blake and Mouton)
    4. Contingency theories
        a. Contingency (Fiedler)
        b. Situational (Hersey-Blanchard)
        c. Path-goal (House)
        d. Leader-participation model (Vroom-Yetton) (see also IIF3e)
        e. Leader-member exchange

5. Other theories
    a. Attributional
    b. Transformational vs. transactional
    c. Substitutes for leadership

F. **Power and political behavior**
    1. Definitions and concepts (authority, power, and influence)
    2. Sources of power
        a. Individual
        b. Organizational
    3. Empowerment
    4. Organizational politics — concepts and causes
    5. Political strategies
    6. Ethical behavior (see also IIB2 and VD)

G. **Conflict**
    1. Nature and causes (for example, scarce resources, workforce diversity, and interdependence)
    2. Functional and dysfunctional conflict
    3. Managing conflict
        a. Resolution tactics
        b. Negotiation

IV. The Organization (25%)

A. **Organizational design/structure**
    1. Classical principles (for example, division of labor, span of control)
    2. Structural models and types
    3. Determinants of organizational design/structure
    4. Job design
        a. Job rotation/cross-training
        b. Job enlargement
        c. Job enrichment
        d. Job characteristics theory (Hackman and Oldham) (see also IIE4f)
        e. Technology and job design (see also VE)
    f. Alternative approaches to job design (for example, social information processing model, alternative work schedules and workteams) (see also IIID)

B. **Organizational culture**
    1. Characteristics and determinants
    2. Maintaining organizational culture
        a. Employee selection
        b. Socialization process
        c. Employee development
    3. Behavioral implications of organizational culture

C. **Organizational change and organizational development**
    1. Definitions and concepts
    2. Forces for change
    3. Resistance to change
    4. Models for managing change
    5. Organizational development

D. **Stress**
    1. Definition
    2. Sources
    3. Individual differences
    4. Consequences
    5. Managing stress
        a. Individual strategies
        b. Organizational strategies

V. Integrating Individuals, Groups, and Organizations (5%)

A. **Global organizational behavior**

B. **Workforce diversity (see also II and IIIB3a)**

C. **Improving organizational quality**

D. **Social responsibility/ethics (see also IIB2 and IIIF6)**

E. **Technology and human behavior (see also IVA4e)**

Sample Questions

The questions that follow illustrate those typically found on this examination. These sample questions are included to familiarize you with the type of questions you will find on the examination. The answers can be found on the inside back cover of this guide.

1. A study examining the effect of job satisfaction on employee attendance determined that employees with high job satisfaction came to work during snowstorms, while employees with low job satisfaction stayed home during snowstorms. In this example, which type of variable is job satisfaction?
   1) confounding
   2) dependent
   3) independent
   4) moderating

2. An organization is about to implement a nonsmoking policy at work and expects opposition from many of its employees. In the publicity campaign, what should management share with employees to promote acceptance of the policy?
   1) only the positive aspects of the policy
   2) only the negative aspects of smoking
   3) both the positive and negative aspects of the policy
   4) both the positive and negative aspects of smoking

3. Under which circumstances should an organization be more interested in the average level of employee satisfaction rather than in the correlation between satisfaction and performance?
   1) when turnover and absenteeism are high
   2) when productivity is high
   3) when employees with higher levels of performance are leaving the organization
   4) when the majority of employees display a low level of effort

4. A supervisor makes attributions on the basis of how well an employee performs. Which form of information processing is the supervisor using to make attributions?
   1) consensus
   2) consistency
   3) distinctiveness
   4) stereotyping

5. The rural scene on an office calendar brings back fond memories for an employee who grew up on a farm. This is an example of which type of learning?
   1) classical conditioning
   2) operant conditioning
   3) social learning
   4) behavior modification

BASE YOUR ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS 6–9 ON THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

Williamson owns a polystyrene recycling business. She employs 10 machine operators, two material handlers, and a truck driver who transports polystyrene. Williamson knows that her business success is tied to the productivity of the machine operators.

Two months ago, Williamson made several organizational changes in an attempt to motivate the machine operators. First, she expanded the scope of their jobs by assigning them additional tasks. Second, she changed their pay system from an hourly wage to a piece-rate schedule. Third, she implemented a performance goal system that increased the production target by 20 percent.

Two months later, the productivity of the machine operators has increased by only 5 percent. All the machine operators are upset because they feel that they are not being paid for all the work they perform. Some machine operators are angry because they are actually making less money than they did before. The truck driver and the material handlers are upset because their hourly wage system did not change. They feel they are now working harder for the same pay. Finally, Williamson is upset because productivity has not increased as planned.

6. Which component of goal-setting theory best accounts for the failure of Williamson's performance goal?
    1) goal acceptance
    2) goal difficulty
    3) goal specificity
    4) self-efficacy

7. From an equity point of view, the complaints of the truck driver and the material handlers seem to be concerned with procedural justice. Which action should Williamson take to eliminate the inequity for these three workers?
    1) Eliminate their performance goal.
    2) Increase their hourly wage by 5 percent.
    3) Develop a piece-rate system for them.
    4) Assign additional duties to the machine operators.

8. If Williamson wants to continue using the new piece-rate system, what should she do to address the complaints of those machine operators who are now making less money?
    1) Demonstrate that a pay-for-performance system does not guarantee that everyone will make more money.
    2) Increase the piece-rate amount by 5 percent to compensate for the relatively small increase in performance.
    3) Adjust the performance goal from a 20 percent increase in production to a 10 percent increase.
    4) Ensure that all operators will make at least as much money as they used to.

9. What belief regarding compensation led Williamson to implement a pay-for-performance compensation system?

    Compensation systems
    1) should guarantee a consistent income.
    2) should guarantee a flexible benefits package.
    3) oriented toward individuals are generally the most effective.
    4) with a group incentive plan require that employees trust each other.

10. Which communication medium has the highest information capacity?
    1) bulletin
    2) electronic mail
    3) letter
    4) memorandum

11. Which type of communication network is most effective in ensuring group member satisfaction in small formal groups?
    1) all-channel
    2) formal chain
    3) grapevine
    4) wheel

12. Which group function is a maintenance role?
    1) taking charge and setting goals
    2) communicating information to outsiders
    3) gathering information for decisions
    4) supporting group members

13. A manager is involved in a participative decision-making process with employees. Which step could the manager take to reduce the potential for groupthink?
    1) State a position clearly before the group makes a decision.
    2) Encourage group members to reach consensus as quickly as possible.
    3) Ask group members to avoid reexamining decision alternatives.
    4) Encourage group members to voice objections about the group's course of action.

14. The executive council of a youth organization votes to invest all surplus funds in an aggressive venture involving some risk. A poll of the individual council members following the vote reveals that each member had planned to vote to invest the funds in a conservative, less risky mutual fund. The voting behavior at the council meeting illustrates which phenomenon?
    1) groupshift
    2) group cohesiveness
    3) involvement
    4) social facilitation

15. Which is an important aspect of quality circles?
    1) involving the entire organization in the change process
    2) focusing on customer satisfaction and process improvement
    3) incorporating upper management participation in the change process
    4) empowering employees to solve problems in their area of responsibility

16. What do research results indicate regarding the trait approach to explaining predictors of leadership?
    1) Physical traits distinguish leaders from followers.
    2) Some traits predict leadership and are present in all leaders.
    3) Some traits predict leadership but these predictions are not consistent.
    4) Certain traits differentiate effective leaders from ineffective leaders.

17. A supervisor is in charge of a work team whose members have considerable ability and willingness to perform their jobs. According to Hersey and Blanchard's situational theory, which leader behavior is most appropriate for the supervisor?
    1) delegating
    2) participating
    3) selling
    4) telling

18. Which leadership theory defines a leader as one who enhances follower motivation so that followers experience need gratification?
    1) Graen's leader-member exchange theory
    2) Hersey and Blanchard's situational theory
    3) Fiedler contingency theory
    4) House's path-goal theory

19. Which organizational design is characterized by standardization?
    1) adhocracy
    2) bureaucracy
    3) matrix structure
    4) simple structure

20. A corporation has a program that enables managers to present certificates to employees who achieve the highest sales record in the unit. This program exemplifies which level of culture?
    1) artifacts
    2) basic assumptions
    3) socialization
    4) latent

21. Action research is comprised of which activities?
    1) systematic study of employee behavior on a case-by-case basis
    2) executive actions needed to solve organizational problems
    3) collection and analysis of data for systematic change in the organization
    4) systematic study of opportunities and threats in the organizational environment

22. In order to reduce resistance to change, who should implement a planned organizational change?
    1) quality circle group
    2) group of employees affected by the change
    3) change agent external to the organization
    4) interdepartmental team

23. Which situation is the best example of technostress?

    1) A manager fails to provide employees with feedback on reports submitted electronically.

    2) An employee learns a new tracking system quickly and causes resentment among the rest of the office staff.

    3) A manager promises employees a new computer system but fails to provide the computer due to budget constraints.

    4) An employee makes corrections to a document more easily with a new software application, but finds the system is frequently down.

24. A customer service department manager schedules weekly staff meetings as a way to exchange pertinent information with department employees. One employee is very hesitant about disagreeing with the manager during meetings. According to Hofstede, which cultural dimension could explain the employee's behavior?

    1) individualism

    2) power distance

    3) quantity orientation

    4) uncertainty avoidance

25. Which activity is not consistent with a reengineering approach to work processes?

    1) identifying the organization's distinctive competencies

    2) using computers to automate outdated processes

    3) assessing the organization's core processes

    4) reorganizing horizontally by process

Learning Resources for this Exam

Excelsior College recommends that you obtain <u>both</u> of the resources listed below for your use in preparing for the examination. It is essential that you study from <u>both</u> of the recommended textbooks rather than just relying on practical experience in organizational behavior. Together, these two textbooks provide very good coverage of the topics on the content outline. For information on ordering from the Excelsior College Bookstore, see p. 2. You may also find resource materials in college libraries. Public libraries may have the textbooks or may be able to obtain them through an interlibrary loan program.

You should allow sufficient time to obtain resources and to study before taking the exam.

Recommended Resources

Nelson, D.L., & Quick, J.C. (1996). *Organizational behavior: The essentials*. St. Paul, MN: West.

Robbins, S.P. (1998). *Organizational behavior: Concepts, controversies, applications* (8th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

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Notes

Excelsior College Examination Development Committee
in Organizational Behavior

Key To Sample Questions

Question	Key	Content Area[1]	Question	Key	Content Area[1]
1	3	IC	14	1	IIIC3e
2	3	IIB4	15	4	IIID3
3	1	IIB5	16	3	IIIE2
4	2	IIC3	17	1	IIIE4b
5	1	IID1	18	4	IIIE4c
6	1	IIE3c	19	2	IVA
7	3	IIE3b	20	1	IVB1
8	4	IIE3b	21	3	IVC4
9	3	IIE4e	22	2	IVC4
10	2	IIIA2c	23	4	IVD2
11	1	IIIA4	24	2	VB
12	4	IIIB5	25	2	VC
13	4	IIIC3d			

[1]Content Area refers to the location of the question topic in the content outline.

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